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To: R. W. Komer
From: JHL
Subject: SPP No. 26 (Greece, Turkey, Iran, Arab States, Israel)

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I. Conclusions

The US position in the Near East will probably be slightly better in 1953 than it is at present. This estimate is based on the following considerations:

1. Greece and Turkey will be integrated into a Western defense system, and a Western command structure for the Eastern Mediterranean region will be in being.
2. Turkey's military strength is being will increase substantially and Greece's to a lesser extent.
3. Western strategic air-base and stock-piling programs in the area will be far advanced.
4. Iran, while possibly subject to greater Soviet influence than at present, will not be much more vulnerable to Soviet aggression than at present.
5. Although the British position in the Arab States will probably be further undermined, the area will be no more vulnerable to Soviet aggression than at present. (See note on page 7)
6. In the event of a relaxation of tension in the East-West struggle, neutralism will increase in Iran and the Arab States. However, ~~they will under no circumstances~~ these countries are extremely unlikely to become pro-Soviet and will continue to suppress indigenous Communism. If, on the other hand, the threat of Communist aggression in the Near East increases, some of the Arab states might

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even be induced to join a Western defense system. US assumption of greater responsibility in the defense of the area, together with increased US economic and military aid to these states, would increase their inclination to contribute to a Western defense system.

II. Major trends and developments

During the next two years the following trends and developments in the Near East can be predicted with a fair degree of certainty:

1. Greece and Turkey will be firmly integrated into a Western defense system, either through membership in NATO or as a result of the establishment of a Mediterranean Pact which will be closely tied in with NATO.

2. Turkey's military potential will constantly increase; its present critical deficiencies in NCO's, stock-piles, logistical planning, communications, aircraft, and airfields will have been overcome to a considerable extent in two years. Its armed forces will probably continue to increase in manpower, and it will have an airforce of exclusively jet combat aircraft. The continued expansion of Turkey's forces will place a continuing strain on the country's economy. As a result, US economic assistance will have to continue at a high level, even though direct military assistance may be greatly reduced. Assuming such assistance, as well as close integration of Turkey and Greece in a Western defense system, Turkey will increase the strength of the Western coalition to a significant degree.

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3. The Western program of strategic air bases and stock-piling thereon will be further implemented. In two years, eastern Mediterranean or Near East strategic air bases in the following areas will be ready for use in the event of war: Libya, Crete, Cyprus, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and possibly Egypt and Iraq. Arab nationalism in Libya and the Enosis movement on Cyprus will raise problems in connection with the air base programs but are unlikely seriously to interfer with them.

4. Extreme nationalism and anti-Zionism will continue to prevent the effective integration of the Arab states (with the possible exception of Saudi Arabia) into a Western defense system for the Near East. There is almost no likelihood of a significant improvement in Arab-Israeli relations during this period. Nationalism will continue to undermine the traditional bases of British strength in the area and may compel the British to withdraw their military forces from Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. If they do not withdraw, they will constitute a constant irritant to Arab-Western relations.

5. There is a slight possibility that the Arab states and Iran might be induced to cooperate with the Western powers in building up Near Eastern defenses against the threat of Soviet aggression. This possibility rests on three extremely problematical contingencies:

   a. Acceptance by the US of major responsibility in organizing and developing the defenses of the Near East.

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This would cost a lot of money.

b. British willingness to forego the dubious advantages of its Arab defense treaties and to place its trust in a new relationship in which the US would play the major role and Arab nationalism would be assuaged. This would cost a lot in pride.

c. Greatly increased Communist activity in the Near East and Soviet activities directed towards the Near East. Arab leaders would be more inclined to cooperate with the West if the threat of Soviet aggression were more imminent and acute. Near Eastern neutralism can be attributed to a very great extent to comparative inactivity and lack of initiative of the Soviets in the area. However, unless there is a significant improvement in Arab-Western relations, it is unlikely that the USSR will make any greater effort to subvert the area.

6. The US program of economic and token military aid on a slightly expanding scale will have the effect of partially off-setting the instability induced by Arab-Israeli animosity and the anti-Western bias induced by Arab nationalism and the Palestine issue. No great material benefits will derive from this program during this period. The Arab refugees will continue to need support in 1953 and the standard of living in general will be little, if at all, improved.

7. The pattern of Communist activity and Soviet pressure is unlikely to change during the next two years. Propaganda and diplomatic

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pressure on Greece and Turkey will probably remain at a high level. The firmness of Turkey's pro-Western alignment may occasionally be probed by a Soviet offer to conclude a non-aggression pact or some such gambit. It is unlikely that the USSR would accomplish anything by such tactics. In the Arab States, the USSR will continue to exploit and foster any developments which have the effect of undermining Western influence in the area. Communist activity is unlikely to play a leading role in such developments, and it is unlikely that the Communists will be able to gain control of the nationalist movements.

8. The situation in Iran is unique in that Western influence is in a fair way to being completely eliminated. However, in view of the highly independent attitude of the Iranians toward the USSR, as well as toward the West, it is unlikely that the USSR (at least during the next two years) can gain control of the country except by armed force. As a result of the oil controversy with the UK, Iran may conceivably be compelled to submit to increasing Soviet pressures. However, even if the Tudeh Party came to power, which is extremely unlikely, Iran would not be very much more vulnerable to Soviet aggression than it is at present, although the psychological effect of such a development on other countries in the Near East would be very serious.

III. Continuing Major Threats

The foregoing estimate of trends and developments is based on the assumption that the USSR will not attack the area, and thereby risk

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precipitating a global conflict, during the next two years. If the USSR does in fact attack the area, it will probably be able to overrun it (with the exception of Greece and Turkey) as easily in 1953 as it can in 1951.

In addition to this primary threat to the US, the following possible developments may be considered major threats:

1. Iran and the UK may be unable to come to terms in the oil controversy. If Iran cannot obtain Western assistance in running its oil industry, it may turn to the USSR for such assistance and thereby give the USSR an opportunity to increase its influence in the country. Even if Iran does not turn to the USSR for assistance, the non-operation of Iran's oil industry for a long period would contribute to greater political and economic instability, which might give the Tudeh Party an opportunity to take over the government.
2. UK-Arab relations may become so embittered as to undermine all Arab-Western relations. The development of this threat will depend to a very great extent on the degree to which the US is believed to be supporting the British. If the British use force to maintain their treaty rights in [redacted] (or to protect the AIOC concession - Iran) the Arab States, there is a danger that these countries might even turn to the USSR for assistance.
3. Arab-Israel's hostilities may be renewed. Such a development would prevent the development of closer Arab-Western relations

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and undercut Western efforts to increase the defensibility of the area against Soviet aggression.

4. The Communists may launch a new guerrilla offensive in Greece. At present such a development appears unlikely unless as a part of overt Communist aggression in the area.

Note:

You will have noted that I have adopted a rather cavalier attitude toward the prospect of the UK losing its Egyptian bases. My reasoning is as follows:

1. Bases are not much use unless you can deploy troops in the area. In the event of global war, what troops are going to be available for the defense of Egypt? British (and) US troops will be tied up in Europe; Dominion troops won't leave home.

2. For a long time, therefore, defense of Near East will depend on air and naval forces. These can be based as well in Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Aden, and Libya as in Egypt.

3. In any event, whether the British are in Egypt or not, Soviets can get to Aleppo area by D + 180 and cannot launch offensive against Suez until about D + 260. Even if British are not in Egypt, Western Powers could presumably establish defenses in Egypt by that time, even if some "persuasion" were necessary.

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